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Family of paralyzed cancer patient says neglect continues in Montreal long-term care home

**By** [Amanda Jelowicki](#) • Global News

Posted June 19, 2020 5:11 pm

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WATCH: The family of a paraplegic man living at Grace Hart long-term centre says staff are neglecting him and that it is affecting his mental health. They say the shortage of staff is affecting his loneliness. Global's Amanda Jelowicki has more – Jun 19, 2020



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The family of a man with paraplegia and stricken with cancer says the care he's receiving in a long-term care facility remains inadequate, despite government promises the situation would improve.



brother, Norman. "That takes away someone's will to live in a lot of ways."

Norman Bunnett, 56, moved into the Grace Dart Extended Care Centre in October 2019. A rare type of neck cancer left him paralyzed and helpless. He's now in palliative care. Despite an outbreak of [COVID-19](#) cases at the centre, Bunnett never contracted the virus.

Chantal Bunnett says even before the [coronavirus](#), care at the facility wasn't ideal, with a lack of staff the major problem.

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"He had his worst nightmare come true. He was yelling one night because he can't ring the bell, he was yelling for the nurse and another patient came and covered his mouth and said they would kill him if he kept screaming. Imagine how scared he was," she said.

Chantal isn't yet allowed to visit her brother. She is caring for another brother, Rick, at a South Shore CHSLD, and pandemic restrictions prevent her from moving between the two facilities.

The Bunnett family hired caregiver Rona Fleming to help care for Norman.

She's allowed to visit three hours a day.

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"It's not right. He's sitting in a johnny coat with a catheter, not able to move, dying of thirst. It's just tragic."

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Fleming said many of the staff at the centre are helpful and caring and do the best they can. But she says a major issue is that there are simply not enough workers.

She says Norman is often dehydrated when she visits. Many orderlies don't speak English and can't understand Norman. She says sometimes they will listen to his request and then walk off, never to return.

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He doesn't have air conditioning so he sits in a small, stifling room for hours at a time, and it's unbearable.

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She says all recreational activities were cancelled, as was the care he relies on, including physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

He was finally allowed out of his room to sit on his balcony only two days ago. Despite never contracting COVID-19, he is still isn't allowed outside beyond his balcony.

He's almost always alone, helpless.

"The problem is the orderlies and the staff, in general, are so overwhelmed that they can't accommodate all the needs of people in these residences," Fleming said. "They just can't do it. So the question is, what is the government going to do?"

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Chantal says Norman especially needs emotional care. She says he gets depressed, and although his basic needs, including feeding and changing, are taken care of, no one sits with him and asks him how his mental health is doing.

She said when soldiers were helping out in the facility last month, many sat with him and talked to him about his days while he was a member of the Blackwatch (Royal Highland) Regiment.

They left, and so did their attention.

“Right now we are in dire need of people in these places to really make a more human contact with them — that’s what’s missing. It’s a huge thing,” she said. “There needs to be a level of care that is just there to really go in, give them water, listen to them, help them turn on the TV.”

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The Quebec Government has acknowledged that there is a shortage of orderlies working in long-term facilities in the province. On Monday, hundreds of people began an intensive three month training program to enable the Health Ministry to increase staffing in residences across the province.

The CIUSSS de Centre Ouest Montreal, the government agency that operates Grace Dart, told Global News in a statement that the situation was currently under control there, especially now that staff members who were in isolation have returned to work.

The CIUSSS said the military helped stabilize the situation, and they left the facility on May 28th. They also added that the pandemic has been hard on residents.

“We are aware that the infection prevention and control measures we have implemented because of the pandemic may have had an impact on the quality of life of our residents over the past few weeks, but our goal was to limit the spread of the virus and protect the healthy and safety of our residents. We are, however, pleased to once again allow residents to leave the facility, under certain conditions and in consideration of their conditions.”

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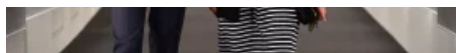
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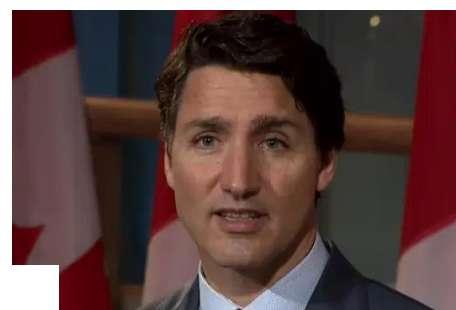
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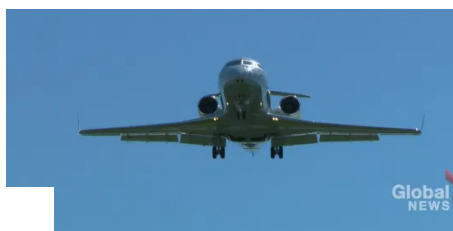
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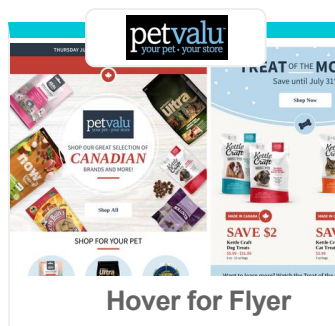
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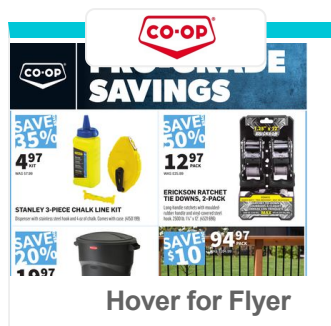
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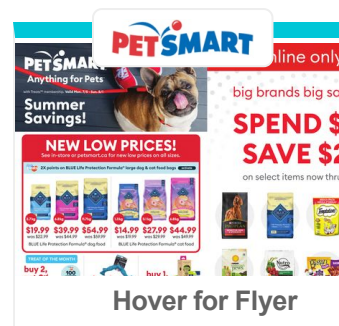
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